

7-046 1966  
Romanian in Canada

Oct. 5th 66

Drágo Phrâla;

Recieved your letter today and I am happy to know that you are well and that your work is continuing smoothly. I have started my campaign again to raise a core of volunteers and backers to assist in the publication of O Gláso Romanó. I have access to a duplicator which must first be repaired and have gathered a small group of local sympathizers who can work with me in various capacities (legal advice, journalism, etc.). What I need now is financial backing and workers. My lawyer is at present trying to obtain a copy of my film from the C.B.C. archives since they have no further use for it and we have. When I obtain it I will use it as the basis of a Romany presentation to be given in church halls, social clubs etc together with a lecture by myself and Gypsy folk arts performed by local Romanies. The proceeds will be used for O Gláso Romanó. Meanwhile, I will give lectures in the social science courses of local universities in order to try and raise volunteers from the S.U.P.A. or other sympathetic groups. I have been promised a series of articles by myself in some University newspapers and I have also an ethnological study in the hands of the Gypsy lore society which will be published this fall and in which I have made an appeal for help throughout the world since this is an international journal and reaches many influential people. I expect to recieve many letters from all over the world since Dora Yates was highly elated and spoke highly of this ethnological study. It might just wake up some people to the true facts.

I will not be able to come to Europe this summer because of EXPO 67 as I am at present working for the Montreal Maritime Museum but I hope to build up enough overtime that I will be able to pay a visit this fall or next spring at the latest. I am also in a position to meet many influential people, some of whom might be sympathetic to our problems (I have met some already).

I am confident that in spite of the conspiracy of silence and circumvention of the truth practiced by the press that I will find some way to get around this barrier and reach those who can and will help us in our struggle.

I gave your address to Dora Yates and you can reach her at the Library or the University of Liverpool. She is sincere and sympathetic in her understanding of our problems but limited in her efforts to help and you should keep her informed of your progress and also send her any press clippings dealing with our struggle in Britain. I am sure she would accept an article from you on the present day conditions and problems in Great Britain.

I ~~xxxx~~ am also working on the establishment of a local Romany charity organization through my lawyer which will need the membership of a few people of unquestionable integrity to form a committee. We can then approach corporations etc in order to collect finances which we can allocate to whichever area of the world is in need of them.

The difference in Canada is that no matter how sincere and honest a person might be in his aims his actions are questioned until he gains that status of "respectability" which fortunately I now have through my efforts in the past years.

I will draw up a simple primer of Romanes for children and send you a copy when it is completed. It will be based upon the international dialect but I will try to present the more modern form of the language which relies more on separate prepositions rather than on the inflected case forms which latter I will use only when there is no other way of expressing the idea. (For example, katár, from; and ánda-out of, are modern prepositions, thus we can say, katár o manúsh - from the person; rather than, Le manushèstar - the man-from, and ánda o manúsh me kèrdèm lês - because of the person. I did it, rather than, Kèrdèm lês le manushèska. )

I will also send you a tape recording of the alphabet and pronunciation together with a corresponding written chart which you will be able to use as a master guide in both learning the language yourself and in teaching it to others.

There are many differing pronounciation of Romanes and I will give you that of the Hungarian Romany which is clear and melodious and not too different from

English in that you can say, chavorí, instead of "sheyoxú" of the Kalderásh with its guttural r̥ and French ü. All Gypsies who speak deep Romany can understand one another without difficulty even though their pronunciations vary. I might also mention that the Hungarian dialect is very similar to the English or Welsh dialect as spoken in its purity. An attempt to teach the English dialect would only result to my mind, in chaos, since personally I would not know at just what stage of decay we should introduce it. The following examples, all English Gypsy from the last fifty years might explain this.

Rakêrêsa tu Rómanês - Do you speak Romany(Pure English Romany- Hungarian Gypsy -

Vakârês tu Rómanês?.

Does tute rakkêr Rómani(Middle state of decay)

Do you ròkêr Rómani.(present state).

The International form would be "Dês-dúma, Rómanês? - Do you give(dês) talk(dúma)

Romanly?.

The verb rákkêráva, is pure Romany and stems from the Sanskrit "pratikarna" but has vanished from the Balkan dialects though it survives in central and Eastern European dialects . The proper pronunciation of "gorgio" is Gazhó and stems from the Sanskrit and Prakrit "Garhya-gadjha" which means domestic or dependent from the days when the Gypsies were metalsmiths in Asia and were the providers of utensils to the pastoral and warrior tribes around them. Tinker, stems from, the older, tinkári, through tzinkári-tzingári, original zênd-kára , and means also a metal worker from the land of Zênd(old Persia). Thus the Gypsies are not one people but many peoples and what they have in common is a common way of life rather than a common origin applicable to all Gypsies although they all speak a form of primitive Sanskrit or proto-Indo European speech. The Irish Tinkers have yet to be studied but by the examples of shelta that I have recorded I believe them to be a people in their own right and dispossessed of their original homeland by later invaders. They are pre Celtic and their are suggestions in their culture of Phoenicia and Africa.

I will keep you informed of my progress which I hope will be rapid until  
we have finally an ~~xxxx~~ press organ with which to represent ourselves.

Yours .

Ronald Lee

*World Roman Community*  
*Canada*

PER

*Ronald Lee*  
*Delegate General*

Greenways  
Knockholt  
near Sevenoaks  
Kent

October 25th., 1966

Dear Ronald,

I was very glad to get your letter and learn of the progress you are making. I only wish we were not on opposite sides of the Atlantic at this stage.

First of all, is there any chance of you coming to Europe this winter so that you could be in London for the foundation meeting on December 10th., Human Rights Day? You raised our hopes by saying that you might be able to get over this winter or next spring. It is worth taking into consideration that for us winter is the time of the most dramatic action when we are trying to resist and counter the evictions carried out by local authorities as travelling families attempt to find their winter quarters, which they have to set up as illegal squatters because there are few official camping sites. The official figure at the moment is that less than one in five families have a recognised stopping place.

As I said in my earlier letter, the meeting is being held under the auspices of the International Gypsy Committee and Vanko, or another member from Paris, will come over to preside. But if you could make it, I hope that you would act as chairman. The meeting will be arranged as informally as possible so that it can be truly democratic and nearer the spirit of self-assertion and self-help which, above all, we want to foster and encourage among Gypsies and travellers in Britain.

Hearing that you are at the point where you can produce "O Glaso Romano", I think it would be much better if we over here dropped our tentative plans for a modest monthly newsletter, and instead give you all the backing we can. As I've said before we can distribute, without any difficulty, 200 copies in Britain and Ireland and this figure will be expanding rapidly over the next few months. We will undertake to cover the cost of postage for distribution here. But what the return in subscriptions will be I don't know. We won't collect much from our readers on the road, but I've been drawing up a list of friends of the movement who, as a way of subsidising the campaign, would probably agree to pay say 2/6d. an issue. This would raise a few pounds. We would circularise

members of the Gypsy Lore Society and I will certainly be in touch with Dora Yates. They published an article, by A.M. Fraser, on the campaign in Ireland.

Let me know when you want us to start sending news stories for the paper. Perhaps for the first issue you could include some notes covering the events of the movement in Britain and Ireland, say over the past five years. Also, a call for unity among the different groups !

By the way, the projected pamphlet on the situation in Ireland, criticising the authorities on the way they have neglected our families in Ireland, has at last gone to the printers in Ireland. I was hoping to get a "forward" notice from you in time but in lieu of this I put together some quotations from your past letters. I hope you'll approve of this ! I was anxious to give the pamphlet an international slant in the hope of worrying the Irish Government further about its image abroad - the only soft spot we can jab at.

I was talking yesterday to a very active pastor in the Free Evangelical Church. He says he has a considerable following further south in Kent and has established two churches which are attended by Gypsy congregations. I'm putting him in touch with Stevo Demeter and Clement Le Cossec. It seems to be, though I'm not a believer, that these evangelists have some role to play. They have certainly succeeded in bringing people together and raising their spirits. It is clear that we will have to fight the more radical side of the campaign and a formal link is not desirable. Vanko, nominally a Catholic, is avoiding this in France but nevertheless sees that Stevo (who is a member of the International Committee) and the other Evangelists are having considerable success. It is they who are buying the chateau in the Loire valley.

I am prepared to work alongside them on the social side but I don't think they will come very far our way. As you said earlier - and as they frankly say - they are really only interested in "conversions." Still, we could have "O Glaso Romano" on sale at the churches. What do you think about it ?

I'm enclosing a Press release from Vanko on the situation at Montreuil. We are lodging protests and Vanko hopes you will do the same.